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“THE BELFRY.”

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Irvington, N. J., CHRISTMAS, 1871.

## EDITORIAL.

THERE is only a word to say. The Editor, anxious to help as best she might the little Church at Irvington with which she is connected, has appealed to good friends who have written for "The Belfry" the poems and stories which make this little book. She need not say that they are fresh, original and worthy of higher place. She must say that they have been so generously and cordially given that it has seemed almost wrong to accept the gift from authors so distinguished, and for whose literary wares the market is so open. She sends "The Belfry" forth with the hope and faith that it may help in the advocacy of the Church of Geneva, of the Netherlands, of the Hugenots, of the Puritans, of what we now, as anciently, call the "Reformed Church"—always and everywhere, and by whatever name, the representative of the indissoluble marriage of religion and civil liberty.

M. T. H.

Irvington, N. J., December 25, 1871.



## DIVIDED.

THE half-world's width divides us ; where she sits  
Noonday has broadened o'er the praried West ;  
For me, beneath an alien sky, unblest ;  
The day dies and the bird of evening flits.  
Nor do I dream that in her happier breast  
Stirs thought of me. Untroubled beams the star,  
And recks not of the drifting mariner's quest,  
Who, for dear life, may seek it on mid-sea,  
The half world's width divides us, yet, from far—  
And though I know that nearer may not be  
In all the years—yet, O Beloved ! to thee  
Goes out my heart, and, past the crimson bar  
Of Sunset, westward yearns away, away,  
And dieth toward thee with the dying day.

*Germany, 1867.*

DAVID GRAY.

## ALL IN A LIFE-TIME.

THOU shalt have sun and shower from heaven above,  
Thou shalt have flower and thorn from earth below,  
Thine shall be foe to hate and friend to love,  
Pleasures that others gain, the ills they know,—  
And all in a life time.

Hast thou a golden day, a starlit night,  
Mirth, and music, and love without alloy ?  
Leave no drop undrunken of thy delight :  
Sorrow and shadow follow on thy joy.  
'Tis all in a life time.

What if the battle end and thou hast lost ?  
Others have lost the battles thou hast won ;  
Haste thee, bind thy wounds, nor count the cost :  
Over the field will rise to morrow's sun.  
'Tis all in a life time.

Laugh at the braggart sneer, the open scorn,—  
Ware of the secret stab, the slanderous lie :  
For seventy years of turmoil thou wast born,  
Bitter and sweet are thine till these go by.  
'Tis all in a life-time.

Reckon thy voyage well, and spread the sail,—  
Wind and calm and current shall warp thy way ;  
Compass shall set thee false, and chart shall fail ;  
Even the waves will use thee for their play.  
'Tis all in a life-time.

Thousands of years agone were chance and change,  
Thousands of ages hence the same shall be ;  
Naught of thy joy and grief is new or strange :  
Gather apacé the good that falls to the !  
'Tis all in a life-time.

EDMUND C. SPEDMAN.

WITH A CROSS OF WILD IMMORTELLES.

WHEN Christ cried—It is done,  
The face of a little red flower,  
Looking up to the Suffering One,  
Turned pale with true love's pain  
And never shone red again.  
In memory of that hour,  
Which holdeth the secret of bliss  
And the subtler secret of sorrow—  
That shall come to each, to-morrow,  
Sweet friend I send you this.

R. W. GILDER.

## HOMeward.

A FAR-OFF shore  
And a beating tide,  
With a rustling breeze  
Away we ride,—  
                Sing for the sea,  
                Sing, sing cheerily.

Swift our painted bow  
Cuts the hissing foam,  
Swift fly the eddies behind,  
Swift we rush towards home,  
                Sing for the sea,  
                Sing, sing cheerily.

On the white beach stands  
My love with her flowing hair,  
She waves her small hands  
For love, not despair ;  
                Sing for the sea,  
                Sing, sing cheerily.

O ! blow heavy breeze,  
Bend our mast, load our sail,  
Rush and dash onward fast,  
And roll to the gale :—  
                Sing for the sea,  
                Sing, sing merrily.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

## HOW IT HAPPENED.

YOU wonder how it happened, Tom? Because a little woman was once divinely good.

Try that meerschaum, Tom—a Senorita of Para gave it that blush rose color, as I happen to know. Well, you see last summer about twenty of us choice spirits “camped out” on Chautauqua Lake, as lovely a sheet of water as you ever trolled in, with as lovely points along its wooded shores as ever you tacked for. And by the way, never prate of the charms of nature, Tom, until you have lived cheek by jowl with her—nothing between you and the tree-tops by day and a bit of canvas by night; then, in a quiet way, woods and waters and all her secrets of sound, scent and color come to be part of the furniture of your soul.

We were living in that quiet way, fishing and sailing by day and telling stories around our crackling camp-fire at night. Our tents were in three great divisions, one the ladies’ sleeping room—the other end being our night quarters, and between them the general store-room where their trunks and our traps were stored. Two weeks of cloudless weather had prepared a welcome for the thunder-storm that broke over our devoted tents one afternoon. How it poured through the leaves till every tree seemed a water-spout, and how when night fell the blinding flashes rolled our tents up like a scroll! Unfortunately, our wing was not water proof, while the other rooms proved perfectly sea-worthy. So it was arranged —wretched man that I was!—that we should use the store-room for that night. Mrs. Darling and half-a-dozen

dear girls turned in with a beautiful zeal, and soon had our blankets spread on the floor. Good-nights over, a subdued laughing and talking going on on both sides the dividing canvas, I, having robed myself in my red flannel "extinguisher"—a nondescript kind of bag that swallowed me up neck and heels—and having completed the general imbecility of my appearance by knotting a handkerchief at the four corners as a night-cap, to keep off dampness—sat balancing myself on a trunk. Somebody got off an infernal joke. I went into convulsions. It soothes my spirit even at this lapse of time to say that I afterwards gave him convulsions. The trunk, it seems, was raised on two round sticks to secure it from possible dampness just where the floor, being higher than that of the ladies' room, sloped down to meet it. The trunk gave a lurch—phew, how my flesh creeps!—the canvas was loose and I was shot clean through it from the sliding trunk into that room. Great heavens! think of the situation! It was like a sea burial, only it was a living death,—talk of a "dem'd, wet, uncomforfable body"—I should infinitely rather have had a comfortable wet grave in the Atlantic. I lay there like a gigantic lobster, my head between my knees, not daring to shift my position lest I should be recognised, until an angel in a soft blue wrapper, her golden hair floating—a fairer wrapper still—below her waist, tore a sheet from one of the beds and flung it over me. I think she felt my glance of deathless gratitude, though I am conscious that the linen horns that apparently sprouted from my eyebrows must have marred the effect. I crawled back with dignity in my sheet which I instantly filled with bananas, oranges and every luxury within reach,—they do say that several Havanas were found in it,—and pushed it through. The boys all swore eternal secrecy.

Well, the rain fell all next day, but more and more gently until at night-fall it resolved itself with the clouds into a heavy fog. This in turn, grew lighter and thinner as night set in. About nine o'clock I left the camp-fire and strolled alone to the pier. What a night was that! The wonder, the beauty of it hushes me even now. The moon shone large and soft through the mist—not a breath stirred the leaves or the shining water—distance was no more, the farthest shores drew near—all nature was in a trance—the water dreamed of its wooded banks, and so like the dream and its substance you could scarcely separate them. Slowly, not suddenly, it grew upon my consciousness that other eyes were seeing what I saw, and so it seemed quite natural to find the golden head that had haunted my thoughts the last twenty four hours within the shadow of one of the spiles of the old pier. It seemed wholly natural to sit down beside her without apology. O, if I could make you see that picture, Tom ! The mist was penetrated by the moonlight till it was no longer mist, but only a less ethereal light—a light to be drunk in by the eyes, a light to be felt like the blessed touch of lost fingers. Take the loveliest face that ever blessed your dream by day or night, Tom,—let it be withdrawn from you by a little space—the holy space that death makes between you and a fair face only it must have none of the coldness of death, rather life with a transient spell upon it,—a glory of fair hair about it, soft shadows stealing from the shut lids to soften, not obscure, its divine beauty ; and you may guess at what the moon was to us that night as it lay in the dark heavens, its silver edge dissolved in the luminous mist.

And so, side by side, wrapped in the luminous shadow—it happened.

ANNIE R. ANNIN.

## SINGING IN THE SNOW.

I RAISED my head from my folded arms and looked around the rooms which held all my worldly goods. They were three in number—bed-room, kitchen and parlor. We ate and sat in the latter, and the tea-table was in the middle of the floor, ready for the evening meal. The china, cut-glass and silver upon it—even the damask cloth, made the other furniture the more shabby by contrast. A cheap carpet—and such an one has an offensive style peculiar to itself, of proclaiming its real value,—a chintz-covered lounge, and two arm-chairs to match; quite at the back of the room, the piano which was my only brother's wedding-present to me,—these, with half-a-dozen light, cane-seated chairs furnished the twelve-by-twelve apartment. My mother's likeness was over the mantel; three or four engravings hung against the tawdry paper of the walls; there were white Holland blinds at the windows—straight and ghastly in the twilight creeping down into the narrow street. This was what I called "home!" I, whose love of the beautiful had been a passion from my babyhood; whose first step had been upon a velvet carpet; with whom purple and fine linen were daily wear; sweet sounds and fair sights and dainty diet so much a matter of course that when poverty came into our abode—a giant armed, I laughed to scorn his fierce visage, played with his weapons as an ignorant child might toy with a poisoned dagger. Blessed ignorance it was which had saved my poor old Ned from what he dreaded as the bitterest ingredient in the cup so forcibly and suddenly given him to drink—the sight of my dismay, the hearing of my wails over departed pros-

perity. I was bright and hopeful in those first dark days —“his angel of cheer,” he said.

He never called me that now. How could he, when with experience of poverty’s real ills,—the shutting out of the warm, beautiful summer world in which I had disported myself for twenty-three years—the hard, unromantic drudgery of every-day life,—horror and loathing, then despair had laid hold upon my soul? I never reproached my husband with the ruin that had swallowed up my sunshine. In my most rebellious moments I acknowledged that he was not to blame, but the villainy of others, yet my evil case was none the easier to bear on this account. He had given up his law-office and the small practice he had gained as a young lawyer whose ample means made him indifferent to patronage, and was now earning our living—just that and nothing more, by hard work in the office of a daily newspaper,—toiling with pen and scissors as might any man who had been “brought up” to the printer’s trade! I think this hurt me worst of all. It was so like harnessing Pegasus to a street dray, or setting blind Samson to grind in the Philistine mill.

“It is the duty nearest my hand, Pet,” he said in answer to my outbreak of tearful remonstrance. “I must grasp the first handle turned toward me, let it be rough or smooth.”

No other had yet been offered him, and we had lived three-years in these three rooms, upon the second “flat” of a plain frame house in an unfashionable street. I had dropped out of society. Fine dresses, a smiling face and a merry tongue, spacious rooms and money with which to reciprocate hospitality were essentials in social intercourse. Having none of these, I was as a dead woman out of mind to my former friends, and I made no new

ones. People become bores when they can talk of nothing but their own miseries, and what other topics had I at my command? I detested the household details which were the staple of conversation with my present neighbors. I baked, boiled, roasted and seasoned with the precision of an automaton. They did the same *en amore*, never having cared for anything better. I had—yet I had not opened the piano in six months, nor read a new book in the same time. I was always too weary, or too wretched. Life was such a hard pull and the up-hill road so rough and miry. That very day—the 24th of December—Ned and I had almost quarrelled about a couple of tickets which had fallen to his lot in the Editor's office—orders of admittance to a lecture advertised for Christmas Eve, as the most brilliant of a popular course.

"Just the thing you would enjoy!" he said, coaxingly.

"Just the thing I used to like, you mean!" I retorted, "I have forgotten how to enjoy anything. And the hat I have been retrimming to day would be disgraceful beside the fine feathers I should see there. But I wish you would go, Ned! Never mind me!"

"As if I minded anything else!" returned he, with unusual sharpness. "You know I would coin my heart's blood into gold, if money could buy you happiness!"

The implied doubt nettled me.

"There is no place upon God's earth for the poor!" I rejoined. "They ought to be killed off by Act of Congress!"

He said nothing. That was his way when I was very unreasonable or petulant. He only kissed me and went off to his afternoon work. And I, when I had put the room in order and laid the table for tea, sat down with my sewing by the window, and drew tighter the bands of despondency and doubt of God and man about my heart

with every stitch, until, between the cloudy twilight and the mist in my eyes, I could see no longer. Then, I laid my arms upon my work-stand—a pillow for my aching head—and “continued the subject.”

Christmas Eve ! We had spent but one in the elegant home in which I had begun housekeeping, but what a glad, social party we had assembled there that night. We danced and sang and talked until midnight, and, then, as the bells rang in the Christmas morning, we exchanged gifts and wishes for the future of one another, breathing peace and good-will. Agnes Leonard stayed all night with me, and dined with us on Christmas Day. She was the dearest friend of my girlhood, the dearer, with a great pity blended with my tenderness after I guessed that she had learned to love my betrothed before she knew of his attachment to me. She had dropped me with the rest, but gradually, shame, or lingering affection hindering her from such abrupt renunciation as had been dealt out to me by the many. She had not entered my humble abode for a month or more, having affected to be wounded at her last visit because I persisted in my refusal to go abroad, except to church, and resolutely declined her invitations to meet others at her house. Ned had seemed to excuse me at the time, but privately told me afterward that she had a right to be hurt ; begged me not to cast away a tried and true friend for a “ morbid whim.”

Morbid ! That was what everybody called my state of mind. No one understood the suffering that engendered it—not even he for whose sake I chafed at the cruel bondage of circumstance. It angered me that Ned took Agnes’ part. They seemed—these two—to be in a manner leagued against me. I stood alone—shut off from the world’s notice and favor by penury—from the few who loved me by my unhappy “whims.” Thus it was that I

fell to thinking about Agnes—my old time friend—and Ned. Of how much they liked and admired one another;—of high, gay spirits and bright face and the graceful figure always faultlessly arrayed, and the handsome fortune she held in her own right, while I had never been a beauty or a wit, and was obliged now to wear faded, unfashionable dresses and mended gloves and made-over bonnets, and had brought my husband no dowry except a heart full of love. The love that was heart-break now at thought of the narrow sphere in which he toiled, the meanness of his home--my helplessness. If he had but married Agnes, who, I was sure, had once loved him fondly ! Her hold upon him would have been the firm grasp of a friend to one drowning in the surf that would have dragged him to shore and safety. Mine was the clinging of limp sea-weed, entangling and holding him down.

"I wish I were dead!" I cried aloud, and passionately, "That the toil and strain, the parting and the anguish were over and that he were free!"

I had wept my eyes dry before I caught the sound of the light, fleet tread, the joyous whistle which had often jarred upon my mood. To-night they were a positive insult to my finest feelings,—to the sublime self-abnegation that had moved me to prayer for my own untimely decease. Up to the second floor he bounded--three stairs at a time and was in the room before I could light the gas. There was firelight enough to show him where I stood, and he laughed as he kissed me in the dark.

"Asleep or dreaming, my darling?" he said, and taking the match I had struck, he touched the drop-light over the tea-table, bringing out starry glints from goblets and fruit-dish, and making moons of light upon the silver.

"I have a trifle here for you, Pet," he went on in play-

ful tenderness that had in it a shadow of wistfulness I could not but observe, "I couldn't get anything elaborate, you know. This little preacher spoke to me from a window as I was passing a picture store."

It was just a colored print—such as you can buy for twenty five cents, straw frame and all—of a Robin Red-breast perched upon a log-fence covered with snow,—a winter landscape all about him; in the distance a low-roofed cottage, also snow-topped, and over-head a leafless tree.

"Singing in the Snow!" said Ned, softly, putting his arm around me. "Bless his brave heart! Wouldn't one say his throat was swelling with summer music? That is because he looks right up, you see, and knows while the sun moves and shines the return of summer is sure!"

I held the picture, my head bent above it until the upward gush of a new and sweeter fountain of tears could be no longer restrained.

"O, Ned," I sobbed, hiding my head upon the dear breast I had deceived myself into imagining I was willing should be another's resting place. "Forgive me! I have been so weak and wicked! But I will try again!"

He had a message for me from Agnes who had called at the office that day. We must dine with her to-morrow. The carriage would call for us early in the forenoon.

"We can give her our answer at the lecture to-night," said Ned in the most natural way in the world. "See! I shall hang Robin at the top of your toilet-glass!"

That was six years ago. Times are better with us now. Ned has resumed his law practice, and we have a whole house to ourselves and baby, in a pleasant quarter of the city. In place of the small oval which was my little preacher's pulpit then, he hangs against a plate-glass,

wide and high, with a richly carved frame, but his closer setting is still the red-and-white straw. Strangers eye him with polite wonder ; my more intimate visitors smile and question.

" Only one of my whims," I answer.

Nobody but Ned and I must know his story and his mission. Even he has never learned how dark was the hour, how dire my need when Robin came to me with his text—" Singing in the Snow!"

MARION HARLAND.



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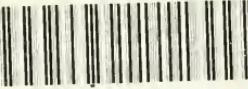




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